

CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

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VOL. II.

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NO. 20

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another, as I have loved you—JOHN xiii. 34.

FOR THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

SKETCHES NO. II.

Having in our first number given a summary view of the character ascribed to God by the gospel, and the first principles taught by it of man's duty towards his creator, we shall next proceed to consider the *social and relative duties* inculcated by the same divine authority.

The doctrines of the New Testament, with respect to that duty which man owes to his fellow man, are such as necessarily result from our natural and civil connections, and such as reason teaches us any system of morality, established by the sanction of a divine authority, must contain. Man is a social being, and his happiness is dependent on the virtuous exercise and discharge of the social duties. To give us complete fruition of this happiness, the gospel lays us under the strongest obligations to be good parents, good children, good neighbours, good masters, good servants, good citizens and members of society. It teaches us to consider ourselves as intimately allied to *all our fellow men* by the endearing bonds of *one common nature*. That in the love of God and of our neighbour, is virtually comprised the *whole moral law*.—That we are not to confine our benevolence to the narrow circle of our friends, relatives and acquaintances, nor solely to that party, church or community to which we belong, but to diffuse it to the utmost verge of the rational creature of the most high.

In the parable of the *Samaritan*, we are taught to look upon every one as our neighbour who is in distress, however we may differ from him in religious sentiments, and whatever unhappy prejudices, on account of nation, party or opinion, we may have entertained against him. It enjoins strict justice in our dealings with others, to do to others as we ourselves should ex-

pect, were *we* in *their* circumstances, and *they* in *ours*; to make restitution when we have injured them, and generously to forgive those who have offered us injurious and contumelious usage. It recommends benevolence and charity as the perfection of virtue—the glory of human nature, and the distinguishing badge of its professors. Its tendency is to extirpate from the human heart envy, pride, malice, revenge, malevolence, and every principle and passion destructive of the harmony and happiness of human life, and subversive of the noble satisfaction of true self enjoyment. To such a pitch of perfection does it tend to exalt our nature, and carry human virtue, that it commands us *to love even our enemies*, and instead of revenging an injury, to forgive the authors, and pray, sincerely pray, that God also would forgive them. The *morality* of the gospel, therefore, is in every instance, so pure and sublime; so perfective of domestic, social and civil life; so worthy the great and good parent of all natural beings, that our ideas cannot form any revelation from God, to contain a more excellent and perfect system of conjugal, parental, filial, relative, social duties, than what the New Testament comprises and enjoins as the great rule of life, and the standard of our moral behaviour and conduct.

Christianity tends also to improve and exalt human nature, with regard to the exercise of *self-government* and *personal virtue*. Its grand object and aim is to possess us with real goodness of heart, and to give us all the happiness flowing from this invaluable possession. It is the study and ambition of its great author, to purify the human heart from every corrupt affection, and to make us assert the superiority of the rational and intellectual over the animal and sensual part of our natures: To make reason preside and the inferior appetites obey; to purge the mental eye from the films of vice, and vicious prejudices and passions;

and to possess all its powers with the sacred love of holiness and virtue. Temperance, chastity, self government, moderation in our desires, contentment in our situations, submissive to God in our afflictions, an unruffled tranquility and mildness of disposition, an unaffected humility, a mutual condescension, an amiable probity and candour of mind, a simplicity of manners, and a conscientious rectitude and integrity of principle, are the great duties it enforces, and recommends by every motive and argument; by every insinuating form of address; and by every consideration that can excite us to cultivate and improve what is truly excellent and amiable, to adorn our minds with the noblest attainments, and to pursue and secure the ultimate dignity and perfection of the rational creature. Thus is the morality of the *gospel* worthy of *God* to publish, and, shining in a living character, evinces itself to be the supreme glory and felicity of human nature.

The gospel is indeed the only scheme that has given morality its final perfection by the additional sanctions which it has annexed to it, and its cogent motives and powerful incentives, cannot be resisted by any serious, ingenuous, and well disposed mind. What constitutes the supreme excellence and glory of the gospel is its pure and perfect morality, tending to make human nature what *God designed it should be*; leading us to the imitation of his rectitude and holiness, and fitting us for the eternal fruition of him in those sacred mansions, into which nothing that is impure or defiled can enter. And it is observable, that in order to convey these useful lessons of moral instruction to the human heart through the most proper vehicle, and to make the remembrance and impression of them most durable and permanent, they are not ranged into a methodical systematic form, and detailed in a dry uninteresting series of didactic maxims. Those great rules of life are interspersed and

interwoven, not without design, into the body of this divine system; sometimes they are delivered as short sententious maxims; sometimes inserted in the middle, beginning, or end of a discourse; sometimes they form the moral of a parable; and sometimes they are taught by a familiar example. There is great wisdom in *this* method of conveying instruction to men; for, a short moral story, or fable, is seldom forgotten; and virtue, exemplified in real life, has the most powerful attractions, and seldom fails to make indelible impressions. The gospel has, therefore, in it every thing, with regard to its scheme of religion and *morality*, to demonstrate it to be the *wisdom* of God and the *power* of God; to be an explicit revelation from the ETERNAL SOURCE of light and truth, and to have every signature, as to its moral injunctions and the method of communicating and enforcing these instructions, which we can suppose a *divine* hand to impress upon any system of duties.

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Errata—Page 69 Col. 2. line 19. for all rationally read all rational beings. Col 3, line 34, for whose read who is.

FOR THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

MR. EDITOR,

In reading the communication of "Marcus," I was forcibly struck with these words, "See thou do it not"—"Worship God." These words the writer seems to suppose were spoken by Jesus to his servant and disciple John: and if it were certain that he is correct in this particular, it certainly forbids any thing like supreme worship to be paid to the Son of God. That it was something more than reverence or respect that John was about to pay to the angel, or messenger, is obvious; for had it not been, Jesus would not have forbidden it. See Matt. viii. 10. xiv. 33. xv. 25, and many other places: See also Luke xiv. 10.

But the question is, was it Jesus who thus "disclaims" worship, as due to himself? It has been generally supposed that it was not Jesus himself who talked with John, but an angel; and therefore both the prohibition and injunction—"See thou do it not—Worship God"—were very proper, even on the common hypothesis—i. e. that Je-

sus is the second person in the trinity, and as such may and ought to be worshipped. The angel, whoever he was, if he told the truth, was but the "fellow servant" of John, and one of his brethren "the prophets:" of course he was not God. But which of the prophets, whether Jesus, (or Elijah, who appeared with Jesus on the mount,) or some other, may admit of a question? And as it is a question of some importance, I have endeavoured to examine it, for the purpose of coming to a correct decision on the subject. The statements of Marcus, however, may be generally true, even if he should be incorrect in this particular; but if he be correct in this, it puts the subject beyond all dispute.

The writer of the Revelation himself, calls it "a Revelation of JESUS CHRIST, given him by GOD, to shew unto his servants the things which will shortly come to pass." Rev. i. 1. It seems therefore that it has been improperly called "the Revelation of St. John the divine." In the original the title is ΑΠΟΚΑΛΥΨΙΣ, THE REVELATION, without saying of whom, or of what person. It should undoubtedly be called, therefore, the revelation of Jesus Christ, and not the revelation of St. John. "And God sent and signified *them* (i. e. the things which will shortly come to pass) by his messenger to his servant John." Who was this messenger which was sent to John? This is now the question:—"by his messenger to his servant John; who now declareth this word of God and what he saw,"—what who saw?—answer—what John saw; for it was John who saw the vision—"what he saw, as it was declared unto him by Jesus Christ." Jesus Christ, therefore, according to this testimony, was the messenger, or angel, which God sent to his servant John; and who dictated to him what he should write to the seven churches of Asia; and who shewed him all "the words of the prophecy of this book," which he was commanded not to "seal up," the time then being near, when some of the events, at least, were about to take place. That it was Jesus Christ, in his glorified state, who appeared to John on the isle of Patmos, appears also from his saying, as in ch. i. 18. "I am the first and the last; and I was alive, but died, and now continue liv-

ing forevermore: and I have the keys of death and the grave." Now turn to ch. xxii. 8, and on, "And I John saw and heard these *things*; and when I heard and saw *them*, I fell down to worship at the feet of the messenger who was shewing me these *things*. But he saith unto me: Take care not to do *this*: for I am but thy fellow-servant, and one of thy brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book;—Worship God."*

It may perhaps be objected here that the messenger at whose feet John fell down to worship, was one of the seven angels, who had the seven phials, (ch. xxi. v. 9.) who it seems had been talking with John for some time, and had shewed him the great city, &c. But it must be recollected that those angels were a part of the vision itself, and therefore could hardly be the messenger who shewed him those things. But it may still be objected, that since Jesus says (ch. xxii. v. 16.) "I Jesus have sent this messenger of mine to declare these things unto the churches;" that it was the messenger which Jesus sent, at whose feet John fell down to worship. But this I think can hardly be admitted, since the messenger which Jesus sent, appears to have been John. It was John who addressed the churches, as in ch. i. v. 4. "John to the seven churches in Asia:" &c. It appears therefore that Jesus who declared these things to John was the messenger of God; and John who wrote and declared these things to the churches, was the messenger of Jesus. These being the facts, and clearly made out by what is written, at whose feet would John be so likely to fall down and worship, as at the feet of his lord and master Jesus? That Jesus was present at the commencement of this vision, I think cannot be doubted, and that he was present at the conclusion, when he says "I Jesus have sent this messenger of mine," &c. appears equally clear. On the whole therefore, we agree with "Marcus," that one of the most important, and, perhaps, one of the most pernicious additions which has been made to the prophecy, is, the adding to the unity, and simplicity, of the object of supreme worship and adoration. A.

* The words above in *Italic* are supplied, and the text is quoted from Wakefield's translation.

Christian Messenger.

Philadelphia, Saturday, December 16, 1820.

FOR THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

MR. EDITOR.

I admit with Q that but comparatively few men have minds sufficiently enlightened, duly to appreciate the principles of a pure religion, entirely divested of outward forms and ceremonies, and that they are incapable of estimating the beauty of its principles and the truth of its doctrines; I will also admit that the entire abolition of ceremonies in religion would not, altogether, destroy hypocrisy; I will likewise further admit that ceremonies may be necessary to Catholicism, Episcopalianism, Methodism, and many other *isms*; but to Christianity, pure and uncorrupted Christianity, as taught in the scriptures, ceremonies are not necessary; they are contrary to its spirit, its doctrines, and its precepts; therefore as a christian I must object to religious ceremonies altogether; first, because although they are not the sole cause of hypocrisy, yet, they erect a false criterion whereby we judge of the characters of men, and thereby open a wider field for hypocrisy, 2dly, because they are calculated to draw the minds of weak men from the fundamental duties of religion, and impress them with the superstitious notion that salvation is to be obtained only by a strict observance of those ceremonies, and 3rdly because they are contrary to the principles and doctrines of the christian religion as promulgated by Jesus and his apostles. The two first of these objections, I think, are so self-evident, that they require no argument to prove their truth; the third I think equally self-evident, but as it is to me the most important objection, I shall offer a few remarks to enforce its truth; I will first then quote a few passages from the New Testament to shew what Jesus and his apostles say of the nature of christianity, and their opinion of outward religious ceremonies. Jesus says "The hour cometh and now is, when the *true* worshipper shall worship the Father in *spirit* and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit and they that worship him *must wor-*

ship him in *spirit* and in truth" John iv. 23, 24. James says in his epistle, 1 ch. ver. 27. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." Paul in his epistle to the Galatians 4 ch. 9 to 11 ver. observes "but now after that you have known God or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire to be again in bondage, ye observe days, and months, and times, and years, I am afraid of you lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain." "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free, and be not entangled again in the yoke of bondage," Gal. iv. 9. v. 1. "For brethren ye have been called unto liberty, only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh but by love serve one another, for all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," Gal. v. 13, 14. Again to the Ephesians Paul writes, "For he is our peace who hath made both one and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us having abolished in his flesh the enmity of the law, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances." Eph. ii. 14, 15. "Blotting out the hand writing of ordinances that was against us which was contrary to us and took it out of the way nailing it to his cross." Col. ii. 14. "Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, of the Sabbath days which are the shadow of things to come but the body is of Christ." v. 16, 17. "Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why as though living in the world are ye subject to ordinances," v. 20. "Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in *will* worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body, not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh." v. 23. Those passages I think abundantly prove, first, that the religion taught by Jesus and his apostles was a spiritual religion, second, that Jesus abolished all the ceremonies that existed under the Mosaic dispensation, and third, that so far from ceremonies forming any part of the Christian religion, it seems that the apostle to the Gentiles, in his writings, laboured hard to deter-

and prevent their introduction, an object which it seems the early converts to Christianity were desirous to accomplish. I shall now then lay it down as an axiom, that Jesus as head of the church, as the ruler of his kingdom, is the sole law-giver under the christian dispensation; for God hath set him "Far above all principality and power and might, and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this world but also in that which is to come and hath put all things under his feet and gave him to be the *head over all things to the church*;" Eph. i. 21, 22. therefore any ceremony or ordinance in religion, that is appointed without the authority of Jesus, forms no part of Christianity, and it is contrary to the duty of a christian to observe them, for we ought to be careful as Paul says "That no man put a stumbling block in his brother's way." Christians are commanded to assemble themselves together, to exhort and admonish each other and to build each other up in their most holy faith, but there is no command to observe ceremonies and ordinances---they are but "will worship" and I challenge any one to produce sufficient authority for the observance of any outward religious ceremony as belonging to christianity. What I mean by sufficient authority, is the command of Jesus or his apostles; for I do not conceive the authority of the 'Fathers' sufficient, nor the practises of the early christians, unless supported by the sanction of Jesus or his apostles, because we find that corrupt practices had crept into the primitive churches, even in the time of the apostles. Before I conclude I beg leave to offer a few brief remarks relative to the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's supper. Water baptism is, in the scriptures, uniformly called the baptism of John in contradistinction to the baptism of Jesus which is always called the baptism of the holy Ghost. John's baptism was a temporary institution, and he states the purpose for which it was instituted, "And I knew him not, but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore have I come baptising with water." John i. 31. Paul speaks of "one lord, one faith, one baptism" as belonging to christianity, evidently meaning the baptism of the spirit; if therefore water baptism had

been considered as a part of christianity, Paul would have said two baptisms, but as he speaks of but one, and that the baptism of the spirit, which like the apostolic office was only instituted for a time, and expired with it, we may fairly conclude, that at this time, there is no baptism belonging to Christianity, for there is no professor of the Christian religion, can procure proof of his having been baptised with the spirit, much less the power of baptising, or of imparting spiritual gifts to others, by the laying on of hands as the apostles did,—as to the institution of the Lord's supper, as it is called, it was merely the celebration of the Jewish Passover which Jesus and his disciples celebrated as Jews, in the same manner as we find that, they and all the Jewish converts to Christianity observed all the Mosaic institutions until the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem.

B.

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A TREATISE ON THE CARNAL MIND.

Continued from page 76.

Perhaps it may shock the minds of some, to say that Christ was tempted of his own lust! But since it is true that he was tempted in *all points* like as we are; we must first prove, contrary to scripture testimony, that we are tempted by something besides our own lust; or else we cannot evade the force of the argument; that is, that Christ was tempted of the same.*

"In a word, the Scriptures inform us that he was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. If, therefore, we know how we are tempted, we know, also, how he was tempted. It is a sentiment of mine, that we ought not to argue that for truth, in

* But it may be said here, that Christ was God, as well as man; and it is blasphemous to say that God has *lust*! To which I would answer—In every sense in which Christ is God, in no such sense was he tempted at all—"for God cannot be tempted with evil." Hence, I conceive, that it would be equally absurd, and equally blasphemous, to say that God was tempted of the devil! as to say that God has *lust*!!!—both of which ideas, to me would be, beyond all expression, abominable!!

matters of this nature, of which we have no knowledge by experience."

It is argued, by some, that as we cannot see God with our natural eyes, we have no more evidence to prove the existence of a real God, than we have to prove the existence of a real devil; for the scriptures speak of both, and we can see neither.

I grant that we can see God, in a natural sense, only through the medium of his works; and in a moral and spiritual sense, only through the medium of the spirit, which was manifested in Christ; "And, without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God* manifest in the flesh." 1 Tim. iii, 16. But do we not discover an essential difference, in point of *fact*, between the works of God and the works of the devil? Indeed! I think we do! As it respects God, "The *invisible* things of HIM from the creation of the world are *clearly seen*, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." Rom. i, 20. Now, how are the invisible things of the devil seen by his works? His works are as invisible as he is! For although a lie may be conceived of, yet it cannot be seen; for there is no substance in it, if there were it would be truth! What thing, either of fact or substance, is the devil the author of? Not one can be named! But all the things of him are negative, and totally false.

Who will venture to assert that the devil is the author of the smallest mote that flies in the air; or that he has caused even the shaking of a leaf; or that he has produced one thought in the mind?†

All the power there is in the universe, united, can make no more than infinite power. Just so much power, then, as we suppose the devil to be possessed of, admitting him to be a real being, opposite to God, we must suppose God to be so much lacking of infinite power; which is derogatory to the Divine character.

But it may be said, that, according to this mode of reasoning, just so much power as we are possessed of, it de-

* The term God, here, is not in the original, according to Griesback; but "*os*, that is, *he who was manifest*, &c.

† The reader will notice that I am now speaking of a literal devil, or a real being, opposite to Deity.

tracts from the power of God, in the same sense. I answer, "there is no power but of God." We have no power but what we received from him; for "the powers that be are ordained of God." Therefore, "we are not sufficient of ourselves, even to think any thing, as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." "In him we live, move, and have our being." And although we are real beings, yet we are not, strictly speaking, opposite to God; for we are altogether dependent on him and continually under his control. Our evil thoughts, to be sure, and false imaginations, which proceed from the *carnal mind*, which I conceive to be synonymous with the *devil*, may be said, in a moral sense, to be opposite to the Deity; but all events, all facts, yea, all truth, is of God.

TO BE CONTINUED.

FRIENDSHIP.

Is there a charm on earth so sweet,
As that which warms the glowing heart,
When kindred friends each other greet,
Or give the cordial hand to part?

Friendship! rich guest, to thee we owe,
Full half the smiling joys of life;
Thy soothing balm relieves our woe,
And buries envy, wrath, and strife.

'Tis thou canst quell the angry storm,
And lull the passions of the breast;
A vicious world from vice reform,
And hush the troubled soul to rest.

On thee, as on a bed of down,
Sorrow may swoon its tears away;
Thy charms dispel the sullen frown,
And bid the child of grief be gay.

Yes, gentle partner, cheering guest,
That strews our path with sweetest joy;
Thy smiles can make the mourner blest,
And envy's fiercer shafts destroy.

A SONG OF PRAISE.

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow—
Praise him, all creatures here below,
Praise him for all that he hath done,
Praise God, JEHOVAH, in your song.
Praise him who spread the starry sky,
And fix'd the orbs of light on high;
Who gave to nature form and birth,
And ballanc'd well the teeming earth.
Praise him who all his works adorns,
Made man, and beast, and creeping worms;
The finny and the feather'd tribes,
And for them ev'ry good provides.
Praise him who sent his Son to die,
Our souls to raise with him on high;
To endless joy in realms above—
Praise, praise, O praise the God of LOVE.

K.